

DNREC Division of Parks & Recreation earns the 2019 National Association of State Park Directors Innovation Award

YORKLYN – DNREC's Division of Parks and Recreation has been selected to receive the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) President's Award for Innovation at the annual conference in Rogers, Arkansas. The award is in recognition of the establishment of a public-private partnership and the collective efforts to convert the abandoned National Vulcanized Fiber (NVF) plant into a destination where the public is able to recreate and enjoy preserved historic and cultural resources.

After declaring bankruptcy in 2009, the NVF plant closed and left behind hazardous and abandoned buildings as well as contaminated water and soil. Around the same time, Delaware State Parks acquired 192 acres of conservation and cultural resource lands, to include a historic mansion and the largest operational Stanley steam car collection in the country. Delaware State Parks, in collaboration with state and federal agencies and private developers, was able to purchase and rehabilitate the abandoned NVF properties. This property, in addition to the mansion and car collection, became Delaware's newest state park: [Auburn Valley State Park](#), which spans across the historic Red Clay Valley.

The goals of the public-private partnership were to clean up the contaminated watershed, expand recreational opportunities, and create a vibrant and thriving community with residential, commercial and parks amenities. Since beginning the project,

the partners have:

- Removed 277,490 pounds of zinc chloride, 6,740 pounds of sodium hydroxide, 5,182 pounds of acid waste, 10 pounds of mercury containing waste, 23,460 pounds of soda ash, and 750 cubic yards of asbestos (34 trillion fibers).
- Taken aggressive measures to remove approximately 80,000 pounds of zinc via the ground-water treatment system and another 170 tons of zinc, lead and hazardous levels of PAHs through the wetland project.
- Restored a stream and created wetlands to abate flooding and provide a wildlife habitat. This stream was recently stocked with trout for the first time in decades.
- Removed the majority of non-permeable surfaces to foster better drainage.
- Created miles of accessible trails that include four historic bridges to provide new access across the scenic Red Clay Creek and extend across the state line into Pennsylvania.

“To be recognized by the NASPD as the most innovative state park in the nation is quite a high honor,” said Shawn M. Garvin, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. “Nearly every DNREC division worked on this project and I’m proud of the partnerships that collaborated to remediate the Yorklyn site into a vibrant new state park. We’re excited to offer improved outdoor recreational activities while protecting and enhancing cultural and natural resources.”

In addition to improving the environmental health and increasing outdoor recreation opportunities for the public, efforts to redevelop NVF are creating a substantial economic impact. Upon buildout, an economic analysis determined that activities at the site are expected to generate \$4.5 million in revenue on-site and approximately \$237,000 annually to the state park. Construction projects will generate 400 direct, indirect, and induced jobs and 300 full and part-time jobs

will be created after construction is complete. \$300 million in total economic output is expected in the first 10 years of operation with local tax impacts of \$15 million.

The National Association of State Park Directors is devoted to helping state park systems effectively manage and administer their state park system. The mission of the Association is to promote and advance the state park systems of America for their own significance, as well as for their important contributions to the nation's environment, heritage, health and economy.